

# ***IACH Informer***



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## ***Flu Season***

By Pete Wiemers, Health Promotions Educator

Here's a riddle: Which vaccine is more than 60 years old and yet different every year? If you said, "flu," you're right! October is the beginning of the North American influenza (flu) season and it's time for another round of vaccinations.

The vaccine has basically been made the same way since 1945, yet is different every year because it specifically protects against the three types of influenza virus that the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts will cause the upcoming flu season.

Influenza infections result in about 36,000 deaths every year, especially among the elderly, young children and those with other medical problems. About 59 million people could become infected this influenza season with more than 200,000 people requiring hospitalization.

Children are two to three times more likely than adults to get sick with the flu, and children more often spread the virus to others. Schools and daycares, where children mingle without paying close attention to "covering their coughs," are excellent place for influenza to spread.

It is no surprise that families with school-age children have more infections than other families. On average, one-third of the family members of school-aged children are infected each year.

The elderly are also very susceptible to infection. For those over age 65 years, newborns and young children, and people with serious medical conditions, the flu and its complications can be life-threatening.

Influenza vaccination protects the population at large in two ways. Those who get vaccinated are normally able to develop immunity in three to four weeks. This immunity comes from the creation of special proteins called "antibodies" that attack and disable the virus before it is able to infect the cells of the nose, throat and lungs.

However, children under six months of age cannot be vaccinated. And some older people and people with certain medical conditions will not develop immunity even if vaccinated. For various reasons, their immune systems cannot respond to vaccination.

People who do not have their own antibodies to influenza can still be protected if they are surrounded by others who are vaccinated. High-risk individuals in the community are shielded from infection by the immunity of those around them.

It is very important that families with young children, the elderly, those with serious medical conditions, and those who take care of others (such as nurses and other medical professionals), get vaccinated as early as possible.

The first priority is for Soldiers involved in deployments, but that leaves about three million doses for other active duty military, family members and employees.

Annual influenza vaccination is mandatory for all active duty Soldiers, as well as Guard and Reserve Soldiers on active duty for 30 days or more during the influenza season. Soldiers deploying from Fort Riley have been receiving influenza vaccination during their "Soldier Readiness Processing" since early September. Soon all Soldiers, high-risk individuals and healthcare workers will also be vaccinated.

Vaccination will be offered to military family members, retirees and civilian employees in November and December as long as the vaccine supply is sufficient. The exact dates and times will be published in The Post, displayed at locations around the installation and on Channel 2.

### ***Cover Your Cough!***

Sneezing and coughing – without covering your mouth and nose – send a shower of mucus droplets containing the virus into the air and onto surfaces. Others get infected by breathing in those particles or by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus is transferred from their hands to their mouth or nose.

Common things like telephones, keyboards and door knobs can remain contaminated for several minutes to hours after someone coughs on them. (Continued on Page 4)

## ***Nurse Advice Line***

The Irwin Army Community Hospital Nurse Advise Line hours of operation are as follows: Mondays—Fridays, 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and federal holidays the hours are 9:00 .am. to 5:00 p.m.

***Irwin Army Community Hospital has optometry appointments available for family members and retirees. To schedule an appointment call 239-DOCS (3627).***

## ***Breast Cancer Awareness***

By Pete Wiemers, Health Promotion Educator

For more than two decades, the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month has educated women about breast cancer. The awareness campaign stresses the importance of detecting the disease in its earliest stages through screening mammography, clinical breast examination, and for women 20 years of age and older, breast self-examination.

Mammography screenings are a woman's best chance for detecting breast cancer early. When coupled with new treatment options, mammography screenings can significantly improve a woman's chances of survival. Independent reports indicate that this has been instrumental in the increase in the survival rate for women with breast cancer.

In addition to the use of mammography, health care providers should also examine a woman's breasts, called a clinical breast examination (CBE), as part of routine health care to search for any abnormalities that may be missed by mammography. Breast self-examination (BSE) may alert a woman to any changes in her breasts, but it is not a substitute for mammography screening. The value of BSE is that it helps a woman become familiar with how her breasts normally feel and to notice any changes for early detection of breast cancer.

Cancer is a group of diseases that occur when cells become abnormal and divide without control or order. Each organ in the body is made up of various kinds of cells. Cells normally divide in an orderly way to produce more cells only when they are needed. This process helps keep the body healthy. If cells divide when new cells are not needed, they form too much tissue. This extra tissue, called a tumor, can be benign or malignant.

Benign tumors are not cancer. Eighty percent of all breast tumors are benign. They can usually be removed, and, in most cases, they don't come back. Most important, the cells in benign tumors do not invade other tissues and do not spread to other parts of the body. Benign breast tumors are not a threat to life.

Malignant tumors are cancer. The cancer cells grow and divide out of control, invading and damaging nearby tissues and organs. Cancer cells can also break away from the original tumor and enter the bloodstream or lymphatic system. This is how breast cancer spreads and forms secondary tumors in other parts of the body. This spread of cancer is called metastasis.

Common to all women are daily lifestyle decisions that may affect breast cancer risk. These day-to-day choices involve factors such as poor diet, insufficient physical activity, alcohol use, and smoking. Besides possibly reducing breast cancer risk, lifestyle improvements represent smart steps for a healthier life, since they can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, and many other chronic, life-threatening conditions.

Decrease your daily fat intake - especially saturated or hydrogenated fats. Eat leaner meats and limit red meat. Reducing your fat intake helps prevent other health problems such as heart disease and stroke and may reduce your chance of developing breast and colon cancers.

Increase fiber in your diet. Fiber is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. This type of diet is beneficial for your heart and can help prevent other cancers such as colon cancer.

Eat fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition to their fiber content, fruits and vegetables have antioxidant properties and micronutrients that may help prevent some cancers.

Limit alcohol intake. Evidence suggests that a small increase in risk exists for women who average two or more drinks per day (beer, wine, and distilled liquor).

Maintain an active life style. The U.S. Surgeon General has recently reported that you can help prevent many health problems by engaging in a moderate amount of physical activity (such as taking a brisk, 30-minute walk) on most days of the week. Strive to maintain the body weight recommended by a health professional, since excess fat may stimulate estrogen production.

Don't smoke. Although smoking doesn't cause breast cancer, it can increase the chance of blood clots, heart disease, and other cancers that may spread to the breast.

For more information log onto [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org) or contact your provider.

***Pharmacy News . . . In order to better serve our customers, the Outpatient Pharmacy hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (except holidays).***

## ***IACH Participates in Retiree Appreciation Fair***



Fort Riley's annual Retiree Appreciation Fair was held on Friday, October 20, at the Riley Conference Center.

As always, IACH was there in force! Members from Occupational and Physical Therapy, OB/GYN, Tumor Registry, Patient Representative, Customer Service, Nutrition Care, Preventive Medicine, Clinical Services, Pharmacy, Chaplain, TRICARE, Delta Dental, DENTAC, Primary Care, Pathology, Podiatry, Dermatology and Optometry were there to perform glucose testing, check blood pressure and administer flu shots and give advice and guidance on retiree concerns.

Top left shows a patient receiving his flu shot while the bottom left photo shows the detailed DENTAC display. At top right are two of the Nutrition Care Division staff ready to assist patients with nutrition issues. Bottom right shows Dr. Pefkaros explaining how the eye works and what to do when eyesight is impaired.



## ***Appointment Cancellation Options*** ***A new system to help decrease no-show appointments***

By Jan Clark  
Public Affairs Officer

The no-show rate at Irwin Army Community Hospital averages 62 appointments per day, costing the hospital about \$3M per year.

These no-shows block appointments for other Soldiers and their family members who need access to care. When a patient no-shows an appointment the provider experiences lost time – time when he could be providing patient care.

Appointments can be cancelled by calling IACH's 24-hour cancellation line at 239-8428, or calling 239-DOCS (3627). Patients may also cancel using the Patient Appointment Reminder System (PARS). The system calls patients two days prior to an appointment. The patient has the option of confirming or cancelling an appointment.

In the past calls from PARS registered as "unknown" on telephone caller IDs. Effective October 30 "IACH Patient Reminder" will display on the telephone caller ID when PARS calls the patient to remind them of an upcoming appointment.

The biggest concern facing our patients remains access to care, or the inability to make an appointment. If those unable to keep scheduled appointments cancel rather than no-show, access will improve. Using one of the above cancellation options will not only decrease the no-show rate but will ultimately increase our access to care.

Our ***Physical Therapy Clinic Patient Education Webpage*** at <http://iach.amedd.army.mil/departments/phyTherapy.asp> offers education on the following: common musculoskeletal conditions, foot/ankle, low back, elbow, hand and wrist, hip, knee, leg, neck, shoulder and miscellaneous such as: bursitis, contusion, diabetes and exercise, exercise and weight loss, muscle strain, pregnancy and exercise and a walk-top-jog progression program. "It is our hope that both health care providers and patients alike will benefit tremendously from the information that we've put together on this webpage."

**For appointments call (785) 239-DOCS (3627) or 1-888-239-DOCS (3627)**  
**Visit [TRICAREonline.com](http://TRICAREonline.com) for patient information/Fort Riley website/Services/Medical, Health for IACH Intranet Information**

## Preventive Medicine . . .

A variety of services/classes are available:

- Tobacco Cessation
- Self Care
- Child Health Assessments for CYS programs.
- Health Promotion and Wellness/Healthy Lifestyle
- STD/HIV
- Classes are also available to units upon request.
- Field Hygiene
- Food Handlers

For information or to enroll in a class or schedule an appointment please call Community Health Nursing at 239-7323.

### ***Wash your hands!*** (Continued from Page 1)

Hand washing is a simple habit - one that requires minimal training and no special equipment. Yet it's one of the best ways to avoid getting sick. The combination of scrubbing your hands with soap and rinsing them with water loosens and removes bacteria from your hands. Follow these instructions for washing with soap and water: Wet your hands with warm, running water and apply soap. Lather well.

- Rub your hands vigorously together for at least 15 seconds.
- Scrub all surfaces; including the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Rinse well.
- Dry your hands with a clean or disposable towel.
- Use a towel to turn off the faucet.

### ***Alcohol-based hand sanitizer***

An Alcohol-based hand sanitizer, which doesn't require water, is an excellent option when soap and water aren't available. They are effective in killing bacteria and viruses that cause disease. Commercially prepared hand sanitizers contain ingredients that help prevent skin dryness. Using these products can result in less skin dryness and irritation than hand washing.

Apply about 1/2 tsp of the product to the palm of your hand. Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry. If your hands are visibly dirty, wash with soap and water rather than a sanitizer. Hand washing does not take much time or effort, but it offers great rewards in terms of preventing illness. Resolve today to adopt this simple habit as a way to help protect your health.

### ***Get Vaccinated!***

If you are in any of the following groups or live in a household with someone who is, the CDC strongly recommends that you get the flu vaccine.

- Between ages of 6 months and 5 years, or older than 50 years
- Have chronic diseases of your heart, lungs, or kidneys
- Have diabetes
- Have an immune system that does not function properly
- Have severe forms of anemia or blood disorders
- May be pregnant during the flu season
- Live or work in a nursing home or other chronic-care housing facility

For more information, contact your primary care provider or 239-DOCS, or the IACH Preventive Medicine Service at 239-7323. You can also visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

## Community Efforts . . .

•Happy/Adventure Meals/etc.: We need your help! We are collecting the little toys in the fast food chains' kid meals. They are being passed on to the local Crisis Center. We have found that often children are forced to abandon their homes and are unable to take along any of their own toys. These kid meal toys are perfect—small enough for a child to put in his/her pocket, and giving that child something again of their own. This small contribution costs us nothing and could mean so much. Won't you join us in this campaign? (Call Jan Clark, Public Affairs Officer, 239-7250).

•Pull for the House Pop Tab Recycling Program. Here again is an opportunity to extend a helping hand to others less fortunate. Turn saved pop tabs in to Jan Clark, PAO, 1st floor, room 1-N-7.

- Any other ideas for community support, just call 239-7250. Thanks in advance for your support!

## ***We Ask Your Assistance!!!***

In order to make this newsletter an excellent means of reaching you, our patient, we need your assistance. Are we currently supplying you, via this newsletter, information you want to know? How can we improve? What information would you like to find here?

If you've read this newsletter let us know. If you have ideas, questions, concerns, let us know. Email editor Jan Clark at [jan.clark@us.army.mil](mailto:jan.clark@us.army.mil). Help us make this means of communication one that meets your needs. In advance, thank you!

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